

Appl. No. 09/807,167
Amendment Dated: October 15, 2003

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
Docket No. 286952.120

Amendments to the Claims:

Please add the following new claims, which correspond to claims 31-55 of the '610 patent. The claims below are similarly numbered 31-55 because the undersigned attorney is currently unaware of the highest number of any previously presented claim. The Examiner is requested to re-number the claims consistent with 37 C.F.R. 1.126 by Examiner's Amendment.

31. (new) A floor covering material comprising a PVC layer and having aggregate embedded in the material for providing surface roughness wherein the material incorporates a barrier layer of polymeric material other than PVC fused into the upper surface of the PVC layer, the aggregate being exposed at the surface of the barrier layer.
32. (new) A material according to claim 31 wherein the barrier layer is of a cured polymeric material.
33. (new) A material according to claim 31 wherein the barrier layer is of a thermoplastic material.
34. (new) A material according to claim 31 wherein the barrier layer is at least as flexible as the underlying PVC layer.
35. (new) A material according to claim 31 wherein the barrier layer is transparent or translucent.
36. (new) A material according to claim 31 wherein the polymeric material of the barrier layer provides enhanced dirt release and/or stain resistance in comparison to the PVC.
37. (new) A material according to claim 31 wherein the barrier layer comprises a polyolefin, (co-)polyester, (co-)polyamide, polyurethane, phenol formaldehyde, epoxy or acrylic polymer or a mixture thereof.

Appl. No. 09/807,167
Amendment Dated: October 15, 2003

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Docket No. 286952.120

38. (new) A material according to claim 31 wherein the floor covering material has an embossed surface.
39. (new) A material according to claim 31 wherein the aggregate is quartz, corundum, and/or silicon carbide.
40. (new) A method of producing a floor covering material comprising
- (a) spreading a PVC plastisol on a substrate,
 - (b) distributing over the surface of the plastisol a powder of a film forming, heat fusible polymeric material other than PVC and a particulate aggregate material, and
 - (c) effecting heating to fuse the plastisol and convert the powder into a film,
- steps (b) and (c) being effected such that aggregate is exposed at the surface of the film.
41. (new) A method according to claim 40 wherein the powder is distributed over the plastisol prior to the aggregate material.
42. (new) A method according to claim 41 wherein the powder applied to the plastisol is softened prior to distribution of the aggregate.
43. (new) A method according to claim 40 wherein the powder is distributed over the plastisol simultaneously with the aggregate.
44. (new) A method according to claim 40 wherein the aggregate is distributed over the plastisol prior to the powder.
45. (new) A method according to claim 44 wherein excess powder is removed from the plastisol prior to step (c).

Appl. No. 09/807,167
Amendment Dated: October 15, 2003

Att. Docket No. 286952.120

46. (new) A method according to claim 45 wherein excess powder is removed by suction.
47. (new) A method according to claim 40 wherein the powder is a thermoplastic material.
48. (new) A method according to claim 40 wherein the powder is of a curable resin system.
49. (new) A method according to claim 48 wherein said resin system is cured by heat and curing is effected in step (c).
50. (new) A method according to claim 48 wherein the resin system is curable by UV-radiation.
51. (new) A method according to claim 50 wherein UV curing is effected subsequent to step (c).
52. (new) A method according to claim 50 wherein the powder comprises a polyolefin, (co-)polyester, (co-)polyamide, polyurethane, phenol formaldehyde, epoxy or acrylic polymer or a mixture thereof.
53. (new) A method according to claim 50 wherein embossing is applied subsequent to step (c).
54. (new) A method according to claim 50 wherein the aggregate is quartz, corundum and/or silicon carbide.
55. (new) A method according to claim 50 wherein the powder incorporates at least one of a flow modifying agent, a flame retardant, a biocide, a gloss modifier and a matting agent.